

Chapter 1.0

Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE FINAL EIR

This Final EIR addresses the construction, operation, and closure of the proposed Gregory Canyon Landfill in northern San Diego County on State Route 76 (SR 76) about three miles east of I-15 and two miles southwest of the Pala community. This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The San Diego County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) is the lead agency for the CEQA process since DEH is the agency responsible for the review and approval of the Solid Waste Facilities Permit (SWFP), which is the most encompassing permit required to construct and operate the proposed Gregory Canyon Landfill.

Issuance of the SWFP is a discretionary action¹ by DEH, with concurrence by the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB). Therefore, environmental review is required to evaluate the impacts of the construction, operation, and closure of the proposed landfill and related facilities. The Director of DEH is the decision making body for action on the SWFP and the Final EIR.

In accordance with CEQA Section 21002.1, the intended use of this Final EIR is to identify the potentially significant environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the project, alternatives to the project, and mitigation measures which may reduce or avoid any significant effects. This Final EIR shall also be used as an informative document by other public agencies in connection with any approvals or permits necessary for the construction and operation of the Gregory Canyon Landfill project.

1.1.1 PROJECT CEQA HISTORY

In January 1999 DEH distributed a Notice of Availability in accordance with CEQA Section 150879(a) and circulated the Draft EIR for public comment beginning on January 28, 1999. The Notice of Availability was mailed to responsible agencies and interested parties, and advertised in the San Diego Union-Tribune. The document was available for public review in seven public locations including DEH offices in San Diego and San Marcos, Department of Planning and Land Use, Fallbrook Public Library, Escondido Public Library, Valley Center Public Library, and San Diego (Downtown) Public Library. A copy was provided to Print World in Escondido to provide ease of reproduction for the public.

Although Section 15105 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires a minimum of 45 days for public comment when a Draft EIR is submitted to the State Clearinghouse for review by state agencies, the public comment period for the Gregory Canyon Landfill Draft EIR was noticed as a 60-day period. DEH granted requests to extend the comment period 30 days and the 90-day comment period ended on April 29, 1999. In addition, although

¹ A discretionary action is one that requires the exercise of judgment in deciding whether to approve and/or how to carry out a project.

not required by CEQA, DEH conducted a public meeting on April 23, 1999, in Escondido for the purposes of taking testimony on the proposed project and the Draft EIR. The transcript from the meeting is part of the public record.

Comments on the January 1999 Draft EIR were received from over 400 regulatory agencies, jurisdictions, and individuals. Comments were provided on all sections of the document. Based on the extent and range of comments, DEH determined that additional technical studies were necessary. Based on CEQA Section 15088.5, which provides guidance on recirculation of an EIR prior to certification, DEH determined that recirculation of the Draft EIR was appropriate to provide the public with the opportunity to review the new information.

As a result, the Gregory Canyon Landfill Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR) was prepared for the project. DEH distributed a Notice of Availability in accordance with CEQA Section 150879(a) and circulated the RDEIR for public comment beginning on December 9, 1999. The same process described above was used for noticing and availability. In addition, the RDEIR was made available to the public on the Internet and was available for purchase on CD.

As allowed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(f)(1), DEH required that reviewers submit new comments. Because of the new comments on the RDEIR, the comment letters on the January 1999 Draft EIR are not responded to but are a part of the administrative record. In response to requests, DEH established a 75-day public comment period for the December 1999 RDEIR, which began December 9 and ended on February 22, 2000. In addition, DEH conducted a public meeting on January 28, 2000 in Escondido for the purposes of taking testimony on the proposed project and the RDEIR. The transcript from the meeting is part of the public record.

During the preparation of responses to comments received on the RDEIR, DEH determined that revisions were necessary to the Air Quality and Health Risk Assessment (Section 4.7) and that changes in the conclusions were appropriate in the following areas: Traffic and Circulation (Section 4.5), Noise and Vibration (Section 4.6), and Cumulative Traffic (Section 5.2.5). Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5(a), these changes necessitated recirculation of all or part of only the sections mentioned above.

As a result, the Gregory Canyon Landfill Revised Partial Draft EIR (RPDEIR) was prepared. DEH distributed a Notice of Availability in accordance with CEQA Section 150879(a) and circulated the RPDEIR for public comment beginning on May 25, 2000 and ending on July 10, 2000. The same process used for the Draft EIR described above was used for noticing and availability. The public was informed to only provide comments on those sections and issues included within the May 2000 RPDEIR.

This Final EIR contains responses to comments submitted on the December 1999 RDEIR and May 2000 RPDEIR in accordance with CEQA Section 15088.5(f)(1).

1.2 CONTENT OF THE FINAL EIR

The main document of this Final EIR consists generally of the same chapters and sections that were contained in the earlier EIRs. This Final EIR merges the RDEIR and RPDEIR and incorporates any additions and corrections made in response to comments received on the document during the public review period.

The technical appendices that support the analyses contained in the EIR are provided in Volumes I, II, III, IV, and a portion of Volume V of this Final EIR. Volumes V through XI contain

Appendix T, Response to Comments, which contain the responses to the written and oral comments provided during the public review period for the RDEIR and the RPDEIR in accordance with CEQA Section 15088. The transcript from the January 28, 2000 public meeting is also contained in Appendix T. In addition, letters received after the close of the comment periods have been marked “Late” but included in Appendix T. Responses have been provided to the late letters. Each letter is provided an alpha-identifier. The comment letter is provided first, with the comments bracketed and numbered in the margin. The comment number consists of the alpha-identifier and the number of the comment within that letter. The responses for the bracketed comments in a letter follow immediately after the letter.

1.2.1 Environmental Impacts

Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis, contains a description of both the local and regional settings, summarizes the potential effects of the project in accordance with the applicable regulations, and identifies measures necessary to mitigate any potentially significant effects. Mitigation measures identified in this report, and over which the LEA has enforcement authority, may become conditions of approval for the SWFP.

The impact analysis presented in this Final EIR identifies specific project-related impacts using the identified significance thresholds. The existing environmental setting (i.e., existing conditions) is the basis for documenting the nature and extent of impacts anticipated to result from project implementation. Potential impacts presented in this Final EIR are based on a “worst case analysis” which assumes filling the entire landfill as designed and the closure of the landfill and “worst case” cumulative impacts from other known or anticipated projects.

The proposed project will implement standard conditions and uniform codes as required by the County and/or other responsible agencies.

In Chapter 4.0 the impact discussions are divided into Short-Term (Construction) Impacts, Long-Term (Operational) Impacts, and Site Closure Impacts. In addition, an option to relocate a portion of the First San Diego Aqueduct on the site is analyzed.

1.2.2 Mitigation Measures

Where the analysis finds a potentially significant impact on existing physical conditions, the impact is identified and feasible mitigation measures provided. Where mitigation is required in Chapter 4.0 of this Final EIR, the section is generally divided into three types of measures as follows:

Proposition C

Section 5 of Proposition C, which was passed by the voters of San Diego County in 1994, contains mitigation measures which are included in this Final EIR to ensure the implementation and monitoring of those measures. The Proposition C measures, which are indicated in *italics* and include a “C” in the number, are provided verbatim. However, Proposition C mitigation measures have not been relied upon in assessing the environmental impacts of the project. More detailed mitigation measures have been developed as part of this EIR to mitigate project impacts identified by the detailed environmental studies completed for the project. These more detailed mitigation measures, and not the Proposition C mitigation measures, have been utilized in assessing the project’s environmental impacts after mitigation.

Project Design Features

The project includes specific design proposals that are referred to as “Project Design Features (PDFs).” In many cases, PDFs address potential environmental effects of development of the Gregory Canyon Landfill site. To ensure incorporation of these measures into the final project design, these measures are identified under a separate heading.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures are recommended for each potentially significant impact identified. The mitigation measures are required to substantially reduce or eliminate the significant adverse effects. To facilitate the identification of impacts and mitigation measures, each significant impact is summarized and numbered, followed by its corresponding mitigation measure(s).

In certain instances, mitigation measures for potentially significant impacts could create their own secondary impacts of implementation. According to the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126[c]), “*if a mitigation measure would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the effects of the mitigation measure shall be discussed but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed.*” Therefore, Chapter 10.0 of this Final EIR contains additional discussion of those mitigation measures that could create potentially significant secondary effects of project implementation in accordance with CEQA Section 15126(a)(1)(D).

1.2.3 Level of Significance after Mitigation

This section contains an analysis of the impacts after the implementation of mitigation measures. Any unavoidable significant adverse impacts (i.e., those effects that either cannot be mitigated or remain significant even after mitigation) are identified in this section of this Final EIR and summarized in Chapter 11.

Upon completion of the CEQA process, if the project were approved even though unavoidable, significant adverse impacts remain, DEH would be required to adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations pursuant to CEQA Section 15093 that identifies and describes the public benefit(s) associated with project implementation that offset or override the remaining significant impacts. The CIWMB, if the Board concurs on the permit, will make any necessary findings, including a Statement of Overriding Considerations, if required by applicable law.

1.3 MAJOR REVISIONS IN THE PROJECT FROM THE PREVIOUS EIRS

The following is an overview of the additional information contained in this Final EIR:

- The ancillary facilities building pad area has been redesigned to reduce impacts to biological resources.
- Leachate collected in the LCRS will be transported off-site for treatment.
- A discussion has been provided for the variance required by RWQCB for the proposed bottom design.
- Year 2000 and 2002 biological surveys have been performed and the findings are provided in Appendix L and Section 4.9 of this Final EIR.
- A Habitat Enhancement Plan has been included in Appendix L of this Final EIR.
- A conceptual landscape plan has been included in Section 4.13 of this Final EIR.

- Two Prescriptive Design Alternatives, which would not require a variance as an “engineered alternative” to CCR Title 27 regulations, are analyzed in Chapter 6 of this Final EIR.

1.4 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

As permitted by Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines, this Final EIR references various technical studies, analyses, and reports. Technical reports used specifically for the preparation of the Final EIR are provided in the technical appendices. Documents and other sources used in the preparation of the Final EIR are identified in Chapter 13.0 (Bibliography).

Documents incorporated by reference include the County of San Diego and Bureau of Land Management Draft EIR/EIS (1990) that included an evaluation of the Gregory Canyon site. Other landfill sites were also evaluated in the 1990 EIR/EIS including the Aspen Road site just west of Rainbow Valley and Interstate 15 (I-15) near the Riverside County line, and the Blue Canyon site within the San Jose Del Valle region of northeastern San Diego County. The 1990 Draft EIR/EIS was not certified. In addition, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) previously certified a Final EIR (May 1993) for the future Pipeline No. 6 which analyzes the corridor and several alternative alignments for the future 30 mile pipeline which is a joint MWD and San Diego County Water District (SDCWA) project. The San Diego County Integrated Waste Management Plan, which was adopted in 1996, is also incorporated by reference. The applicant has filed an application for a Solid Waste Facility Permit (SWFP). A Joint Technical Document (JTD), which accompanies the SWFP application and is on file at DEH and DPLU, is also incorporated by reference. It should be noted that a JTD is an evolving document and on-going revisions are made in response to agency review and comment as the project is further refined. Previous versions of the JTD that are incorporated by reference include March 1999, January 2001, and July 2001.

1.5 DEFINITIONS

Throughout this Draft EIR, certain terms are repeated that have specific significance to the proposed project. These terms are defined below.

- **Applicant:** Gregory Canyon, Ltd. (GCL), its agencies and/or successors; the person or party filing an application with the County of San Diego DEH or any other applicable review agency for approval of a discretionary entitlement request.
- **Associated or Ancillary Facilities:** Include facilities that are part of the landfill operation, such as the on-site access road and bridge, the maintenance facilities, scales, water tank, flare station, recycling area, and borrow/stockpile areas.
- **Landfill Footprint:** The approximately 196 acres of land within the project site that will be used for the landfill.
- **Project Site:** The entire property under consideration, which is approximately 1,770 acres.
- **Project Area/Vicinity:** Includes land outside the project boundary.
- **Proposed Project:** All activities for which construction and operation proposals are in process or clearly anticipated. At the present time, those activities include the Solid Waste Facilities Permit and other related actions identified in the Project Description, Chapter 3. More specifically, proposed project shall mean all of the components of the landfill operation, including the landfill footprint, maintenance facilities, water tank, flare station, recycling area, borrow/stockpile areas, access road and bridge, and relocation of the SDG&E

lines, as well as the rock processing operation and SR 76 improvements. If adopted, relocation of a portion of the First San Diego Aqueduct pipelines may also become part of the project.

- **Borrow/Stockpile Areas:** Areas designated on the property where excavated material would be stored and areas where dirt would be excavated to be used in the operation of the landfill.
- **Worst Case Analysis:** The basis for the environmental analysis presented in the Draft EIR. The worst case scenario is used to identify the highest level of impacts that might occur from project implementation. For example, worst case analysis for traffic assumes a continuous stream of the highest level of daily input expected, i.e. 5,000 tons per day, rather than the average of 3,200 tons per day and includes the transportation off-site of aggregate processed on-site.²

² As discussed in Section 3.8, the exportation and sale of aggregate material would require a Major Use Permit.

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